European Approaches to MPA Education: Convergence and Divergence

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Abstract: This paper sheds light on the experiences of MPA education in Europe concerning its key characteristics, major approaches, and the extent of convergence and divergence in the areas of MPA teaching, research and international cooperation. In a broad perspective, it gives an overview of the development of the European MPA education in the context of globalization and Europeanization for the past 15 years. Specifically, it takes University of Leuven the “European Masters of Public Administration” program as a case study. It mainly argues that there is a strengthening and convergent need and trend of international cooperation of MPA education not only among European universities but also with universities beyond the border of Europe. Despite the convergent priority of internationalization, the divergent approaches to MPA education under the different administrative cultures and financial situations pose challenges to the international cooperation of MPA education.

1. Introduction

Is there a common European perspective on MPA education? Recent inventories of Public Administration programs (Connaughton and Verheijen, 1999) show that a common European perspective or ‘model’ of public administration education has not yet emerged. Public administration and public administration education is primarily a national undertaking (Raadschelders and Rutgers 1999, Rutgers and Schreurs 2000). However, under the influence of globalization and the speeding up of the process of the European integration, the content of public administration education is moving (Verheijen and Connaughton, 2003).

Although there are competing views on whether a European model of PA education exists or not, it seems that there is an agreement on the emergent converging need for public administration education to be internationalized (Olsen, 2002). The globalization and the increased European integration, interdependency and interaction have changed extensively the public administration and public affairs internationally, which has created the conditions for the international cooperation of the (M)PA education (Trondal 2002, Olsen 2002, Connaughton and Randma 2003, Verheijen and Connaughton 2003). The international cooperation (or internationalization) of MPA education has moved from being largely occasional, non-institutionalized towards becoming increasingly routine and institutionalized. In particular, this process has been accelerated by the European Union’s SOCRATES program and the ERASMUS MUNDUS programs (EC document).

The purpose of this paper is to offer a perspective on MPA education in Europe, from the experiences of one participant. Specifically, we wish to shed light on the dynamic processes of Europeanization and internationalization of the MPA education. In order to have a better understanding on the current development of MPA education, first we look at the approaches to (M)PA education in Europe from a historical perspective (in section 2). Then our focus is directed towards the emergent converging and dynamic trend of international cooperation of MPA education in section 3. Section 4 provides an example of the MPA education in Europe by the case “European Masters of Public Administration” program of the Catholic University of Leuven, Belgium. We identify the main benefits as well as the problems and challenges facing MPA education in Europe in section 5. The final section (6) draws some tentative conclusions and presents a prospect for the future development of European MPA education.

2. A historical perspective on Public Administration education in Europe

2.1 The traditional approach to Public Administration education

Verheijen and Connaughton (2003) note that as an independent and integrated field of study in its own right, Public Administration is a relatively young academic discipline. The independent academic Public Administration programs have only become institutionalized and developed in Western Europe in the past four decades. Historically, Public Administration in Europe is rooted in a strong state tradition (ibid). Therefore, the study of Public Administration is traditionally constructed as a study of the state. The most often identified types of the European states in the PA literature are the Anglo-Saxon, Napoleonic, Germanic and Scandinavian states (Pollitt, 2002).
The diversity of state traditions inevitably results in considerable differences among the national styles of Public Administration thought and the approaches to PA education, especially related to the PA curricula (Stillman 1999, Raadschelders and Rutgers 1999, Connaughton and Randma 2003). For example, the PA and the major approaches to PA education in Anglo-Saxon tradition (e.g. the UK, Ireland) are centered on business administration and management, i.e. economics and management. The French tradition is characterized by an interdisciplinary approach to Public Administration, such as political science, policy science, administrative science and some other closely related interdisciplinarity field of study. This approach manifested itself in France, then to a varying degree in a number of North and West European countries, such as Sweden, Belgium, and Spain (cf. Hajnal 2002). In Germanic tradition (e.g. Germany, Italy, and Portugal), the public administration paradigm, relying on the parallel concepts of the strong state and public law, was predominant throughout Continental Europe until WWII. The legalistic administration culture views public administration as a well-running machine, executing detailed legal regulations. The PA education has a strong emphasis on legal subjects (Hajnal 2002, Connaughton and Randma 2003).

2.2 The evolution of (M)PA program as an academic discipline

The predominance of legalistic approach to PA education has been continuously decreasing since the WWII; but it is improbable that the legalistic approach will be quickly replaced by either the public or the managerialist approach (Hajnal 2002). Hajnal (2002:254) argues that the development of the PA program is incremental, “more evolution than revolution.” This section looks at the evolutionary process of the PA as an academic discipline from a predominantly legalist approach towards interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary approaches. In this respect, Verheijen and Connaughton (2003: 835-842) and Connaughton and Randma (2003: 7-8) identify three types and approaches of academic programs in Public Administration in Europe: interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and Public Administration specialization integrated in other programs. All these have been evolved from the legalistic approach.

- **Interdisciplinary** academic programs in Public Administration are defined as programs in which public administration is studied from the integrated viewpoints of different disciplines, generally those of political science, law, economics and sociology. The subject ‘Public Administration’ is taught as the core of the program.

- **Multidisciplinary** programs typically do not include the subject “Public Administration.” Public administration is studied exclusively from the viewpoint of the different contributing disciplines.

- In some European states Public Administration does not (yet) exist as a separate field of study, but rather as self-standing specialization under law or political science or, less frequently, economics or business studies (Verheijen and Connaughton, 2003:835-842).

The emergence of specialized academic programs in Public Administration is a relatively recent phenomenon in Europe, although the study of governance and public administration has a long history in the European context (ibid). According to Verheijen and Connaughton (2003:836-838), Public Administration education in Europe has reoriented itself since the WWII. Some key points of the evolutionary development are as follows:

- First, the new Institutes d’Etudes Politiques (IEP) created in France in 1945, and later of the Ecole Nationale d’Administration (ENA), led to a fundamental shift in requirements for entry into the French administration. Law remains a core element in the preparation for entry examinations into the ENA and the civil service. Yet it no longer had a monopoly. The IEP designed an interdisciplinary Public Administration program. This development marks the beginnings of a fundamental shift in orientation towards Public Administration as a distinct academic discipline.

- From the mid-1950s independent multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary university programs in Public Administration were created in a number of states. In Italy, Finland, Germany, Belgium and the UK, new programs in Public Administration were established between 1955-1970. The rationale for the creation of these programs was based on the perception that the civil service needed to become less legalistic. In the case of the UK, new programs were established primarily as a reaction to the report of the Fulton Commission in 1968, which called for a professionalization of the administration through the improvement of managerial and analytical capacities.

- A second wave of development of new independent programs in Public Administration followed at the beginning of the 1980s in the Netherlands, Ireland and Portugal.

- The development of Public Administration programs in Nordic states (except Finland), France, Greece, Spain and Austria is the creation of increasingly independent specialization in general social science or political science programs.

- During the past two decades, and in recent years, Public Administration programs have also developed stronger links with programs in management or business studies as part of the general focus on management in public administration. These links are strongest in the UK with NPM movement and to a lesser degree,
Ireland, but are also apparent in the Netherlands and in a selection of the Nordic states, especially in Finland.

2.3 A glimpse at the (M)PA education in some European countries
Although our main focus is on MPA education, it would be helpful to have some brief ideas on the general approaches to PA education in individual European countries. We take a quick look at a few characteristics of the (M)PA education in some European countries. The country we choose corresponds to the typical state tradition stated above, namely, the UK (Anglo-Saxon tradition), France (Napoleonic tradition) and Germany (Germanic tradition). We will also present Belgium in later section 4 since our case ‘EMPA’ program from the Belgian Catholic University of Leuven (note 1). The major characteristics of the (M)PA education in UK, France and Germany are presented below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>State tradition</th>
<th>PA disciplinary characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>Anglo-Saxon</td>
<td>– in the late 1960s and 1970s, the teaching of PA as a subdiscipline of Political Science was complemented by the emergence of specialist vocational undergraduate programs. These programs were multidisciplinary, drawing not only on politics but also on other subjects relevant to a public service career, such as economics, social policy, organizational studies, management studies, finance and law. – When student demand declined during the early 1990s, several courses were closed and those that have remained have been redesigned as public policy programs or public management programs within business schools. – Postgraduate courses lead usually to specialist MSc awards in the management of public services or form part of general management development programs for the Diploma of Management Studies or the MBA. – applications of public choice theory, focus on British experience of NPM – the study focus on both central government and local government – the politics and administration of the European Community have become a well-established sub-discipline of politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Napoleonic</td>
<td>– the development of administrative science is inextricably linked to a particular French model of the state. The uniqueness of the state rests on the combination of two phenomena: the social autonomy of the state and the social supremacy of the state. – Influenced by administrative law as PA studied through the prism of legal texts – in the 1960s, the legal, the managerial, and the sociological models in PA were grounded were tearing the study apart. This period of doubt had come to an end by the late 1980s, thanks to the emerging paradigm of public policy. In conclusion, PA remained wedged between legal dogma, public management theory, and political science and thus has difficulty staking an exclusive claim of its subject of interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>Germanic</td>
<td>– PA programs dominated by judicial thinking and methods – Focus on historical bases of state, public law, institutions, legal system and their analysis – Multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approach (to complement legal education, other disciplines enter. PA is taught not only within programs which specialize in PA but also in political science, social science, or business administration, psychology and ethics, etc.)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above descriptions indicate that the PA programs in different administrative cultures have been evolving over time. The processes of European integration have created the momentum for these evolutionary changes in PA as an academic discipline (Connaughton and Randma, 2003). In addition to the disciplinary status of PA as an autonomous field of education, there is another issue related to the education curriculum that attracted much interest: the degree, to which European and international issues are emphasized in university curricula (Hajnal, 2002). The following section will turn to these European and international issues by examining the dynamics of Europeanization and internationalization experiences of MPA education in Europe in some detail.

3. Europeanization and internationalization of MPA education—an emergent converging need and trend

3.1 MPA programs with a strong European dimension

Why is or should a European dimension be emphasized in MPA programs? Many reasons account for this. One is that with the speeding up of the process of European integration, the work of the civil servants in national administration is increasingly permeated by European business. This requires that civil servants become equipped with an understanding of the decision-making procedures and policies of the EU institutional systems as well as administrative cultures and practices in other EU member states. The gradual increase in administrative cross-border cooperation in Europe also requires the civil servants working at local, regional or central government level act internationally. This in turn, requires the Public Administration programs provide them with adequate knowledge and appropriate skills to work in the European arena. To this end, the Public Administration programs need to develop with strong European dimensions and international perspective (Verheijen and Connaughton, 2003).

Second, to develop the European Dimension in education at all levels is to strengthen the spirit of European citizenship, drawing on the cultural heritage of each member state so that the PA students have better knowledge, better understanding, and greater awareness of the education, administration, and culture diversity in Europe. This European dimension can also reveal a critical view of their own systems and situations through a transnational approach (Gordon 2001).

What is the European dimension? The European dimension is not an abstract concept. It is found in practice and in context. It is defined by series of small steps taken within specific projects, such as inclusion and integration of a number of European and comparative courses in core curricula of academic Public Administration programs (Connaughton and Randma 2003, Verheijen and Connaughton 2003). The many European projects on PA education also contribute to the European dimension. Through these projects, European academics and administrations can establish networks to work together in exchange of expertise, good practices and methods by use of information and communication technologies. This will make them feel that they are part of a larger community of interests and ideas and will enhance their belongingness and sensitivities to European affairs (Gordon, 2001). To initiate these European projects, the EU, especially the European Commission has played an important role.

3.2 The role of EU in promoting the European dimension and internationalization of MPA education

In promoting the European dimension as well as the internationalization of MPA education in Europe, EU has played an important role in terms of making policies, initiating projects, and contributing financial support.

Because MPA education operates within the broader EU higher education framework, the EU higher education policies have influences on MPA education and its internationalization strategies. Therefore, in this section, we take a brief look at the EU higher education policies. Then we turn to present the EU projects that have facilitated the MPA education internationalization. The patterns of internationalization of MPA education will be addressed in two dimensions: the internationalization of MPA education within European context and the internationalization of MPA education beyond the border of Europe.

3.2.1 The EU policies facilitating internationalization of European higher education

The EU institutions, including the Council, have taken an interest in the European dimensions of education, hoping to make young people more conscious of European ideas and of being European (Beukel 2001: 131, cf Olsen 2001: 9). The most recent major policies in facilitating the European dimension and the internationalization of higher education are based on (1) Sorbonne Declaration, (2) Bologna Declaration, (3) Prague Communiqué, and (4) Lisbon Recognition Convention.

The Sorbonne Declaration aims at the harmonization of European higher education system and making European universities comparable in terms of excellence with universities all over the world, especially with the United States of America. The international recognition and attractive potential of European systems are directly related to their external and internal readability (Kahn, 2002). To this end, LMD (licence, master, and doctorate) framework is formulated, which corresponds to the standard structure throughout the world. The L refers to the BA (Bachelor of Arts); M refers to the MA (Master of Arts) and D refers to the Ph.D. (Doctor of Philosophy or doctorate).

The main objectives of the Bologna Declaration are to create a common European higher education area, that can:
• promote European cooperation concerning the content of education, particularly with regard to curricula development, integrated programs of study, training and research, inter-institutional cooperation
• increase student and academic staff mobility
• develop a system of credits as an appropriate means of promoting student mobility

The Prague Communiqué targets at assessing the progress and setting priorities to meet the main goals of the Bologna Declaration. The Lisbon European Council Convention of 2000 aims at building knowledge infrastructure, enhancing innovation and economic reform and most importantly, modernizing education systems (Lisbon Council, 2000). Following the Lisbon Convention, the Barcelona 2002 European Council meeting set a goal for European universities becoming “world quality reference” by 2010. It is apparent that after all these policy formulation, the European Commission is clearly “enlarging its field of operation and policy implementation in education” (Van Der Wende 2003, Kwiek 2003).

3.2.2 The EU programs and projects in facilitating MPA internationalization

With regard to the internationalization of higher education and the MPA education, two EU programs are worth mentioning here. One is the SOCRATES-ERASMUS program; the other is the ERASMUS MUDUS program. The former supports European cooperation, and the latter extends the cooperation beyond Europe, i.e. with third countries (EC documents).

3.2.2.1 The SOCRATES-ERASMUS program-to promote internationalization within Europe

SOCRATES has acted as “a window of opportunity” for developing European activities in and with universities. As the sub-program of SOCRATES, ERASMUS is regarded as the “flagship of the EC educational program” (Wit and Verhoeven, document). ERASMUS was in fact, launched in 1987 as a program facilitating student exchange. The focus of the ERASMUS program is to promote the European dimension in universities by intensifying European cooperation and opening access to learning opportunities across the European Union. The main participating countries are within Europe, including the EU Member states, the EEA countries (Iceland, Liechtenstein and Norway) and some associated countries (EUROPA document). According to Wit and Verhoeven, the ERASMUS accounts for at least 55 percent of the overall budget of 920 million euros of the SOCRATES 1995-1999 program. Funded by SOCRATES, we mention here the Thematic Network in Public Administration. It is interesting to note that this network build upon the earlier network that organized Erasmus student exchange and transfer of credits.

The Thematic Network in Public Administration (TNPA)

SOCRATES is the sponsor for Thematic Network in Public Administration (TNPA). The TNPA is a vital so far in facilitating the European dimensions of the MPA education and its internationalization activities. Therefore, it deserves some elaboration. We present some key features of TNPA, which could be helpful in understanding the internationalization experiences of MPA education in Europe with regard to: (1) the concept (2) the aim and objectives, (3) the strategies and approaches (4) the main activities. The references in this section draw heavily from European Commission documents. Therefore, if no special indication, the references are from those documents.

(1) What is TNPA?
The Thematic Network in Public Administration (TNPA) represents a network of 122 Higher Education Institutions and Associations throughout Europe. It consists of higher education institutions with undergraduate and postgraduate programs in Public Administration and/or Public Management. The number of professional groups and associations is likely to further increase in the future as strengthening links with the profession is a key theme in the network’s strategy. The network includes the principal universities active in the PA discipline and is thus representative of the current developments in Public Administration. Its extension is an ongoing objective in order to attempt to involve the optimal number of institutions with academic programs in the subject area.

The TNPA operates as a platform to facilitate and generate discussion on how to develop a European dimension to PA programs and the development of the discipline; to finalize the implementation of the strategy to overcome shortcomings in strengthening the attention for the pan-European dimension in higher public administration studies.

(2) The aim and objectives of the TNPA

The main goal of the TNPA is the development of a greater European dimension in Public Administration and Public Management programs. The network provides a platform for the exchange of information concerning Europeanization and facilitates dialogue between Public Administration teaching institutions in Europe. The provision of such a network, which encompasses the principal institutions involved in Public Administration education in Europe, and the integrated activities of the Thematic Network aim to positively contribute to the challenges and transformations that national Public Administration systems are encountering as a result of the European Integration process. Simultaneously, the projected results of the TNPA may also be perceived as a positive input to the goal of meeting the demand of supplying policy relevant education and knowledge to practitioners working at the various levels of government.
The mission of the first TNPA project “Europeanization of Academic Programs in Public Administration 1997-2000” is to diagnose the state of the art regarding the study of the European dimension in Public Administration programs and related courses in Western Europe, and Central and Eastern Europe; and to design a strategy to overcome shortcomings in order to strengthen a pan-European dimension in higher PA education.

The aim and objectives of the second TNPA project “building the European Dimension of Academic Programs in Public Administration: creating networks for strategic action” are:

- to create and stimulate networks for the implementation of the strategy for the Europeanization of academic PA programs through piloting, establishing and sustaining activities in improving the availability of comparative PA data and programs, links with the profession, East-West relations and accreditation.
- to create a sense of urgency and opportunity among relevant stakeholders, particularly at directional and managerial levels within PA programs and related departments about the need to bring their programs and courses offered in line with the expectation of better European programs and to encourage greater participation and information exchange within the partnership in order to develop the European dimension of Public Administration education and other dimensions of the Socrates program.
- to strengthen links with other existing networks and associations in order to facilitate and sustain cooperation with groups such as NISPAcee (Network of Institutions and Schools of PA in Central and Eastern Europe), and the European Group of Public Administration (EGPA), and with various established research groups in comparative PA willing to translate their projects into innovating, ICT supported teaching and training modules.
- to support the EAPAA (European Association for PA Accreditation) in stimulating the debate on and dissemination of quality control, evaluation and accreditation, in developing quality standards and in preparing and organizing a series of pilot accreditation projects among outstanding programs in PA as a benchmarking, learning and standard setting experience.
- to promote links between universities and higher education institutions offering courses in Public Administration, training institutions providing in-service training and potential employers and professional organizations, both at the national and at the European level through the development of an international internship program and the development of transnational networks linking universities and public administrations.
- to explore opportunities for closer Trans-Atlantic cooperation, and to include the Euro-Mediterranean cooperation in TNPA activities to stimulate cooperation with the Mediterranean partners.
- to contribute to the development and consolidation of EPAN (European Public Administration Network), which strives to build a sustainable basis for the activities of the Thematic Network and the promotion of the European dimension in PA teaching (note 2).

(3) The strategies and approaches
The major implementation strategy to turn the proposed network strategy of the first TN project into effective reality is to create a series of interconnected and operational strategic initiatives, preferably by key figures in the field. The core areas of institutional development of a network are to promote and stimulate the attention for quality in academic PA teaching by:

- engaging in the debate on core curriculum development in PA and spearheading and carrying out European accreditation activities in PA
- joint production of European PA education through joint teaching modules
- joint degree programs
- joint training of young professionals in doctoral networks and summer schools, creating platforms where practitioners and academics meet through thematic workshops, internships, and career guidance systems.

The TNPA project 2001-2004 is centered on the idea of stimulating innovative reform at the operational level in which Public Administration education is delivered by creating networks of strategic action. This strategy outlines different fields of action. For each element of the strategy, a working group has been established:

- Better European programs
- Joint curriculum development
- Summer schools, accreditation
- Doctoral network
- Links with the profession
- Institutional development (East-West relations, Euro-Mediterranean partnership).

(4) The main activities of the TNPA
The above six main modules account for the major activities by the TNPA in facilitating the international cooperation of the MPA program. Limited by page, we illustrate with only two examples in this section.

► Joint Curriculum development
The TNPA supports the development and sustainability of the existing joint curriculum programs like the European Masters of Public Administration (EMPA) program. Participating universities are Leiden,
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Rotterdam, Budapest, Speyer, Liverpool, Vaasa, Tartu and IEP Paris. This exchange-based degree program aims to provide students with a comparative understanding of public sector structures, policies, and process in Europe as well as with a good methodological approach for analyzing the differential structures and processes of public sector management, guidance and control.

The working group concentrates on the Quantitative Analysis of European PA university programs – Phase II project, to be finalized in 2004/2005. The Phase I project has resulted in a number of important insights into the field of emerging European Public Administration education as well as in the creation of a workable method of compiling and analyzing program information. The Phase II project, “European PA education in a comparative view” seeks to extend these results and to make them more sustainable. In addition, the working group undertakes the establishment of the courses syllabus catalogue, to be put on the EPAN website. The purpose of the project is to construct a database of courses syllabus in the Public Administration field.

**Summer Schools**

The annual Summer School is organized by EPAN (The European Public Administration Network, a network devoted to advance the study and teaching about Public Administration in Europe) with the help of ERASMUS funding. This school relates to various other schooling initiatives already undertaken by the membership of the Network. By establishing and continuing the organization of Summer Schools, the Network aims to motivate young teachers to Europeanize their courses by introducing topics related to European institutions and their impact on national administrations and policy processes on the one hand, and to institutions and policies of other European nations and sub-national governments in a comparative perspective on the other. Another objective of the Summer Schools is to supply young lecturers with the methodologies required to make teaching and learning processes more effective and attractive. Such methodologies include approaches founded on problem based learning, use of comparative case studies, ICT and others.

The first EPAN 2002 Summer School was held at Leiden University (The Netherlands) under the title: “Europeanization, Institutional Analysis and Public Administration.” The second Summer School continued focusing on the double goals of strengthening the research competences in comparative public administration in a European context, and developing the pedagogical competences of the participants. Basically, the 2003 Summer School in Bratislava was to imbue the students with a solid understanding of the dynamics, processes and principles guiding public policy management from a truly comparative perspective in a European context. The teachers of the Summer School are acclaimed scholars in their respective fields, with extensive research and teaching experience in Public Administration. The selected topics include: “European Policy Management from a Comparative Perspective”, “Political-Administrative Relations in the Policy Process”, “Multi-level Governance in the European Context” or “Implementation in a Comparative Perspective.”

The 2003 Summer School was a cooperative effort between EPAN and NISPAcee, joining their respective Western and Eastern European traditions and resources in Public Administration practice and teaching (EPAN application 2004). The second objective of the 2003 Summer School was the improvement of pedagogical skills for the participants, particularly learning how to use case studies in teaching and the betterment of lecturing techniques. The third Summer School took place at the Catholic University of Leuven in 2004.

After each Summer School, a certificate is issued by EPAN and the cooperative university for example, the NISPAcee (The Network of Institutes and Schools of Public Administration in Central and Eastern Europe).

3.2.2.2 The ERASMUS MUNDUS program-to promote internationalization within and beyond the border of Europe

The ERASMUS MUNDUS program is a cooperation and mobility program in the field of higher education with the overall aim to enhance the quality of European higher education and to make EU as a center of excellence in the world. The program fosters cooperation with third countries and endows EU-funded scholarships for third-country students and scholars participating in the program’s master’s courses, and for EU-nationals studying in the third-countries. It aims at improving the development of human resources and promoting dialogue and understanding between peoples and cultures. The Commission supports European cooperation projects that highlights improving the brand image, visibility and accessibility of European higher education or which deal with the international dimension of quality assurance, of credit recognition, of mutual recognition of qualifications with third countries, of curriculum development or of mobility.

According to Martinez (2003), the Commission Parliament and Council has adopted the proposal for Erasmus World in 2002, with a planned budget for 2004-2008 200 million euro, is under consideration by the Council and the Parliament, which has called for the budget to be increased to 300 million euro. The main instruments for internationalization include:

- Agreements with the USA and Canada, which were renewed at the start of 2001 for five years
- The Tempus program, which covers the countries of the Former Soviet Union, the western Balkans and Mongolia, and which was extended in June 2002 to the EU’s Mediterranean partners
• The Alfa and Alban programs for Latin America
• Asialink, which involves many countries in Asia
• Pilot projects with Australia and Japan

Compared with the SOCRATES-ERASMUS program, the participants of the ERASMUS MUNDUS program have extended to the institutions from all countries of the world, which means that the cooperation is not only among institutions within Europe, but also with the institutions beyond the border of Europe. Because this program is relatively new EC initiative, it is not feasible to illustrate its activities in detail and assess its effectiveness. The information here is based on the draft proposal of European Commission and the Internet (Web).

4. The Belgian MPA Experiences

4.1 The PA education in general
According to Beyers and Plees (1999), Connaughton and Randma (2003), and some internal documents, we present first some disciplinary characteristics of the PA education in general; then we give an example of the EMPA program of the KU Leuven.

• In general, PA in Belgium is a relatively young field of study, rooted in Law, but with a new generation in political science and sociology.
• Teaching of PA is located within political science departments.
• PA curricula has considerably developed since its original administrative law focus and has gradually come to include core courses on management and public policy.
• Rational choice perspective is rather limited in Flemish PA teaching. Explanatory frameworks more generally rely on organization theory and on historical institutionalism.
• Theoretical and methodological issues are emphasized (with the increasing attention on research methodology).
• The principles taught in PA courses include values that are located at both sides of the dichotomy--politics and administration, although some management masters may emphasize the three E’s (efficiency, economy, and effectiveness) more than the three P’s (Politics, power and participation).

4.2 The EMPA program--European Masters of Public Administration

4.2.1 The aim of EMPA
The goal of the EMPA program, taught at the Catholic University of Leuven, is to equip students with advanced academic training to gain a comparative understanding of public sector structures, policies and processes and to master the methods for analysis of public administration, public policy, and public management. It has an explicit European orientation, which includes the study of institutions and policies of the European Union. Two basic topics are emphasized. One, is the issue of convergence and divergence of public administration, policies, and management in European countries. Another, is the question of how the characteristics of the different systems of public administration within Europe, relate to national and sub-national perspectives on the issue, processes and institution of European integration, both within and across the borders of the European Union (Brans and Pelgrims, 2002).

4.2.2 The courses (core and elective courses)
Verheijen and Connaughton (2003) contend that the number of courses offered on European integration and comparative Public Administration is one indicator of Europeanization; another more important indicator of the degree of Europeanization is whether these courses are part of the core program. Looking at the core courses and some elective courses offered by EMPA program, we note that the core courses of the EMPA program underscore the importance of Public Administration from a comparative perspective, and with strong European dimensions. Some elective courses examine as well the local and regional aspects of Public Administration. We present some recent years’ core courses and some elective courses (that slightly change in different academic years) in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Core courses</th>
<th>Perspectives</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Public Administration in Europe</td>
<td>Comparative, European dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seminar Comparative Administration</td>
<td>Critical thinking with research design and methodology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Economics/Political aspects of European</td>
<td>Economic, Political, European dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Public Management in Europe</td>
<td>Comparative, OECD, European dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Policy-Decision Making:</td>
<td>Political European dimensions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>advanced course</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comparative Public Policy in Europe</td>
<td>Comparative, European dimensions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2
4.2.3 The internationalization experiences of EMPA program

4.2.3.1 The internationalization of higher education in Belgium

In recent years, the KULeuven has taken several steps to position itself internationally. The main elements of its internationalization practices are the cooperation with foreign universities on a bilateral and multilateral basis, developing European programs (e.g. SOCRATES, ERASMUS), and promulgating international course programs (EMPA, Master of Arts in European Studies, International Study Program on Statistics) (Heften, Verhoeven, and Wit, document). In the following section, we focus on the EMPA education internationalization experiences.

4.2.3.2 The network for internationalization of EMPA

The EMPA program has developed from a network, supported by the European Commission’s Erasmus bureau, of different universities, which all participate in the student exchange program. The network attempts to balance the relations between East-West, North-South. After several years’ development and expansion, the current EMPA consortium consists of the following universities:

- Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam-Department of Public Administration (Netherlands)
- Rijksuniversiteit Leiden Department of Public Administration (Netherlands)
- Hochschule Fur Verwaltungswissenschaften in Speyer (Germany)
- Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Department of Political Sciences
- University of Liverpool, Institute of Public Administration and Management
- University of Vaasa, Department of Public Management (Finland)
- Budapest University of Economic Sciences, Center for Public Affairs Studies and the International Studies Center (Hungary)
- University of Tartu, Department of Public Administration and Social Policy (Estonia)
- Institut d’Etudes Politiques de Paris (France)

4.2.3.3 The patterns of internationalization of EMPA

► Student exchange program

The EMPA program started in 1990 as an exchange program for master’s students in Public Administration. Students enrolled in the program of their home institutions, took one semester abroad at a network institution. Students who successfully completed course work and exams at home and partner institutions, as well as the dissertation, received an EMPA certificate, signed by the participating institutions.

To facilitate the network program and exchange, the partner institutions agreed on:

- standards for student entry
- core course curricula
- transferable credits
- minimum course work requirements per institution
- an annual student exchange matrix
Some considerations of a joint degree program 1994-1995

In the mid-1990s, it was considered to use the exchange program and the joint certification as a step towards further consolidation. The network entertained the idea of establishing a joint degree program – Joint Master’s in Public Administration.

The development of a joint degree program demands a certain standardization of the basic units of education, such as credits, number of courses and lectures, workload, and the identification of necessary hours and or credits. More important, however, is the establishment, in mutual consensus, of the necessary mastery of knowledge of Public Administration, which is required at the successive stages of the joint program.

In preparation of the joint degree program, the EMPA network prepared joint standards on:

- entry and recruitment
- implementation of student exchange
- content of the program
- periods of attendance
- course work requirements
- student supervision
- examination
- evaluation of dissertation
- granting of degrees

It further has to agree on issues of finances and fees, exchange of personnel, promotion and publicity, and the inter-institutional bodies of the program.

The procedural and institutional translation of agreed standards into a joint degree program, however, proved impossible for several reasons. Problems were engendered by the unequal spread of benefits and costs over the partner institutions. Different student financing and fees traditions within the network prevented originating sufficient funds to run the program and to equally spread costs and benefits. Therefore, it was decided by the partners to proceed with the EMPA program with joint certification. Many of the principles laid down in the draft joint degree proposal, however, are still valid under the certified program.

Joint certification and deepening the program

Although the idea of joint degrees was abandoned in the mid 1990s, the EMPA partners proceeded to work on the basis of agreed standards without formalizing these in a joint degree program. The Bachelor-Master reforms in all European countries, however, initiated the program in which students now enroll at the home universities, institutionally more similar. Student funding and fee traditions, nevertheless, remain diverse and make a return to joint degrees not favorable. Moreover, partners believe it is no longer necessary to establish a joint degree. They consider joint certification on the basis of joint standards and trust sufficient and wish to deepen the network activities in practice through less formalized but not less effective means. It is interesting to note though, that the new Erasmus Mundus program is exactly looking for the kind of joint degree that was designed in the mid-nineties by the EMPA program.

Now the format of student exchange is this: students who enroll at their home universities can take one semester abroad at one of the partner institutions and whose dissertations are jointly evaluated are eligible for an EMPA-certificate, on condition they successfully complete coursework, examination, and dissertation requirements. This certificate supplements the degree awarded by the home institutions. For example, a student enrolled in the EMPA program at the University of Liverpool becomes a master in Public Administration, and earns an EMPA certificate.

The institutions of the EMPA program

The EMPA program is managed by the EMPA Consortium, consisting of representatives of the partner institutions. The Chair is rotated every year. Since 2000, before transferring the chair, at the annual EMPA Consortium meeting, the incumbent chair delivers an EMPA lecture. The partner institutions assign faculty members for representation at the Consortium, who are responsible for student exchanges within the network, and for furthering the EMPA agenda.

5. Benefits, problems and challenges to internationalization of (E)MPA education in Europe

5.1 Benefits

Gordon (2001) investigates the impact of the internationalization of the PA program on individuals and their organizations and finds some major benefits of internationalization activities by using questionnaires and interviews. Three of them are worth mentioning. In addition to the benefits to students, which apparently correspond to the aims of the internationalization program, there are also benefits for institutions, and for academic staff. We present here the latter two benefits.

Benefits for Institutions.

Through participating in or managing international projects such as SOCRATES, institutions can have outside funding, which give access to activities and products that would otherwise have not been possible. In that sense, the international programs like SOCRATES sponsor a funding structure that creates a “window of opportunity,” and a channel for profiling and imaging. The project approach also contributes to the quality of the institutions’ working methods and the types of materials used. It fosters project management skills, gives the participants the experience of organizing international meetings, improve their team working skills and enhances interactions within the staff, and between staff and students). All in all, the experience opened up the institution to the outside, to Europe and even to the rest of the world. Participating in a SOCRATES project is felt to have significant
repercussions, particularly on small organizations, encouraging them to think “European” (Gordon, 2001).

Benefits for the academic staff.
Through the internationalization activities, staff members can develop new skills such as in languages, project management, information and communication technologies and managing budgets, and improve areas of professional competency and better team working, as well as better knowledge of an area of work through project activity and transnational cooperation.

The benefits of internationalization are one side of the coin. We should not neglect the other side of the coin. The internationalization of the program does present some problems and challenges. We turn to this point in the following section.

5.2 Problems and challenges
Some problems and challenges encountered in the internationalization process are listed as below (Gordon 2001, some internal reports from Wit and Verhoeven, TNPA project, Brans and Pelgrims 2002).

With regard to the mobility of the students, they may be reluctant to go abroad due to:

- lack of financial support
- lack of affordable or suitable accommodation
- inadequate knowledge of a foreign language and of certain cultural aspects,
- Visa problems due to strict bureaucratic regulations in awarding visas
- Short stay of the students raises the question whether they can really learn anything of the other culture.

The problems and challenges at the institutional level and European level are also apparent, which can hinder systematic and systemic approaches to internationalization. For example,

- the credits awarded at different universities are not always considered to be compatible.
- inadequate funding or lack of continuity in funding
- lack of suitable staff
- difficulties in cooperating with partners in other European countries
- the overall administrative overload
- the plethora of detailed rules and regulations that ERASMUS entailed
- difficulty in incorporating all the internationalization activities into the day to day work or into existing curricula.
- systemic approaches are in great need, which should be based on a policy direction with clear objectives and a well-developed strategy to achieve them at national as well as institutional levels
- The SOCRATES grants fund very small numbers of teachers in comparison with the total eligible population. The numbers are unlikely to increase substantially in the short term due to the fund constraints.

- The challenge is that the teachers who learned and benefited from the fund can disseminate information about the course and what they have learned in a broad range of accessible ways so that more benefits could be drawn from the experiences of the beneficiaries.
- Whether SOCRATES can contribute to fundamental change in the education systems requires greater political will, a more organized strategy and a high level of coordination and cooperation among actors at the different levels. It also necessitates the political will of the member states and the means to go with it.
- Problems of sustainability of the efforts of a European project if lack of support
- Given the larger picture, most projects, whether implemented within the SOCRATES context or others, had difficulty in sustaining the hoped for outcomes, whether because of shortages in time and resources, or lack of commitment from individual academics or a shortfall in political will.
- The challenge is the empirical tests about the assumptions and models concerning the dynamics of changes of the internationalization programs
- The benefits from SOCRATES depend on the implementation of a strategy adopted locally and nationally, which needs to be consistent and long term. Formulating such strategy will need to include a reflection on the types of obstacles to be overcome, general financial issues, the need for some forms of recognition or acknowledgment in reward or qualification terms, the need for recognition of work through financial reward or time allowance, etc.

Though there are many problems and challenges, the internationalization process is progressing. In the next section, we look at some future steps in overcoming the problems and meeting the challenges in order to improve MPA education and its internationalization strategies and practices.

6. A future prospect
First, with regard to future deepening the EMPA program, Brans and Pelgrims (2002) write, the EMPA partners are committed to deepen the EMPA program through:

- An extension of student exchanges. On this issue some EMPA partners are faced with solving the following problems:
- European funding for student exchange has become scarce in recent years, and students’ willingness to participate in exchanges is hampered by financial considerations.
• Master’s programs in Public Administration increasingly attract international students beyond European borders. Students from other continents are less willing to take a second semester abroad, after having familiarized themselves with the institutions and countries of the home institutions.
• Semester exchange may have to be replaced by other more flexible tools of exchange – pooling of international students for short modules, summer schools.

► An extension of faculty exchange
• When students cannot attend another institution, other institutions can reach them. In recent years, there has been an increase of faculty exchange, either in short-term format, or in a longer-term format.
• Faculty of Leiden and Budapest have taught at the University of Leuven, and faculty of Leuven at the University of Tartu and the University of Budapest, either through the provision of a taught course, or the delivery of guest lectures.

► An extension of joint teaching material: physical exchange of students and staff can be complemented by the development of joint course material.
• The development of joint modules within the EPAN network is particularly interesting in this respect.
• Other activities to be developed in the future are case material. Some institutions consider building a PA case catalogue, which could be extremely useful for comparative EMPA courses.
• It is considered by the EMPA consortium to inaugurate an annual series of papers by faculty members of the partner institutions.
• The network is interested in the experience of other institutions with the drafting and exchange of case material for teaching.

► Joint evaluation standards:
• The EMPA program has developed dissertation guidelines that will be used by students and faculty, for the redaction of dissertations and their evaluation, the latter of which is a joint enterprise. These guidelines specify quality standards on the content and analytical maturity of EMPA dissertations. They were drafted along the model used at the Department of Government, London School of Economics.
• The EMPA Consortium plans to update the EMPA Handbook, which contains all information of the program at the partner institutions, relevant for both students and faculty.
• The EMPA consortium plans to collect other evaluation standards at different partner institutions, and at other institution, to further joint evaluation practices. It is particularly interested in comparing its dissertation guidelines with those used at other European Universities involved in PA teaching.

In sum, the European integration has impacted upon the Public Administration program throughout Europe. The further the European integration, the more important it becomes to generate a meaningful comparative understanding on varieties of the Public Administration and the PA education. Public Administration programs need to respond to the proliferation of European integration and to the forging of closer relations with the network of European administrations and PA institutions. There is no consensus in the literature on the extent of convergence on a common European model on teaching Public Administration (Olsen, 2002). Divergence of MPA education is likely to continue for quite some time with a variety of administrative models, but a gradual convergence of MPA internationalization process is under way. What is of utmost importance is not to assess the extent of the convergence or divergence, but to coordinate all possibilities nationally and on a European scale and make the most effective use of them to benefit the Public Administration and Public Administration education in Europe.

Notes
1. In 2003, the program’s name changed from EMPA to MEPP (Master in European Politics and Policies); the content, however, has only changed marginally.
2. In fact, in recent years, the TNPA network meets under the name of EPAN.
3. Most of this section refers to the article written by Brans and Pelgrims (2002) although without special indication of the references.

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